



MY LIFE, MY STORY

ROBIN



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

1986-1995



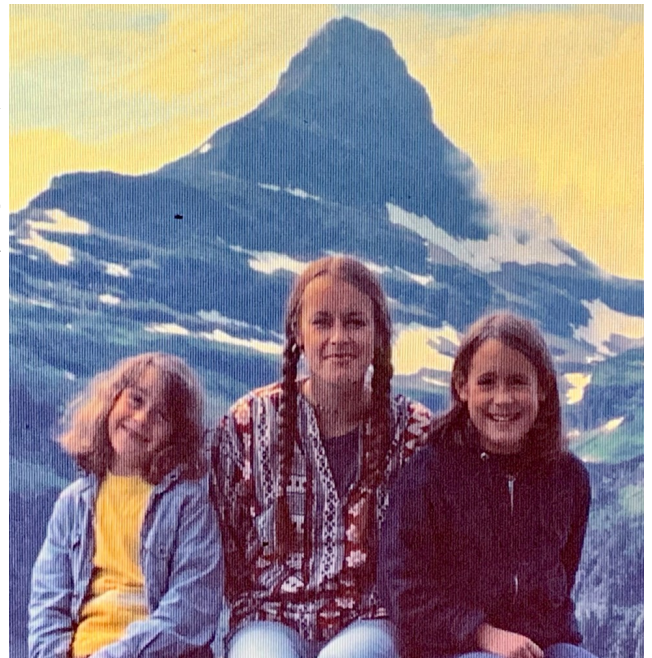
RENAISSANCE WOMAN

Robin

I grew up on the South Shore of Massachusetts. I was always busy, active and exploring. Most of our summers were spent at the family cottage on Snow Pond, in the Belgrade Lakes Region of Maine. We were lucky enough to usually stay for the entire summer. Several cottages lined the shore, which meant lots of cousins to do things with. There were many firsts for me at the Lake: How to pull-start and drive a boat, slalom skiing, diving, swimming across the lake (almost), sailing, cribbage and so on. We've been going every year for nearly 50 years. It happens to be one of my all time happy places.



We did a lot of traveling. Our big annual trip for four consecutive years, usually in August, was driving "out-west" or "cross-country". We were able to visit so many amazing national parks. My parents loved the outdoors, camping and hiking. We went to the Tetons, Yellowstone, Redwoods, Grand Canyon, Rainforests, Mount Rushmore, Colorado Rockies...We went as far north as the Canadian Rockies and as far south as the Everglades.



During my junior year in high school, we took a trip to West Point. My great-uncle was the director of admissions for over 30 years. We were able to see an Army/BC football game, which was so much fun. We also went to a dance at Eisenhower Hall. I remember being very impressed by all the cadets in their uniforms.

Top: Family cabin in Maine.

Bottom: Glacier National Park, MT with mom & sister.

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Being a junior in high school, it was time to figure out the next chapter in life. Weighing my options with school, I thought about our trip to West Point. I began by speaking with an Army recruiter and took the ASVAB exam. My father suggested I speak with all the different branches. It was important to weigh the pro's and con's to see which would be the best fit for me. I spoke to an Air Force recruiter and felt this was the right choice for me. Even though I was only 17, I entered into the Air Force Delayed Enlistment Program. I graduated from high school in May of 1986 and in August was off to Basic Training in San Antonio, TX .

I proudly served for over eight years. Basic training was a challenge in every way imaginable. After nearly 2 long months, I graduated. My technical training school was at Lowry AFB in Denver, CO. My AFSC was Inventory Management. During Tech School, I received my first assignment to Aviano Air Base, Italy. I believe my father was more excited than I was. He knew what an amazing area I was about to be stationed in.

It certainly didn't take long to realize why Aviano was one of the most sought after bases in the Air Force. Perfectly situated in northeastern Italy, in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region. Amazingly, at the base of the Dolomites, also known as the Pre-Alps. Being so central made it incredibly easy to travel between some of the most amazing countries. After about 6 months, my father and step-mother met me at Ramstein AFB. We traveled through Germany and Switzerland. We were able to see some incredible places.



Document Control, Aviano, Italy

Some of the best years of my life were spent in Italy. "If I only knew then, what I know now." Even more so, "Youth is certainly wasted on the young." With that being said, I was able to travel and ski in some of the most spectacular places in the world. Traveling through Italy, France, Germany, Austria and

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Switzerland at such a young age, was an education in itself. Although, there are far too many experiences and places to list, I will name a few highlights: Carnivale in Venice, Oktoberfest in Munich, French Riviera, train ride to Rome, Paris, Palace of Versailles, the Schilthorn, Jung Frau, summer glacier skiing in Austria, cruise down the Rhein and Moselle and so many more. I will be forever grateful to have seen and done so much. Having had such an opportunity, I was able to see more at age 20 than most people see in an entire lifetime.

Another big highlight was when the USO Tour stopped at Aviano. On the morning of 28 December 1987, a C-141 dubbed "Jingle Bells One" with Bob Hope landed. In addition, Miss USA, actresses Barbara Eden, Connie Stevens and country singer Lee Greenwood were also on-board.

During combat readiness exercises, I assisted the EOD Team (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) as an augmentee. I learned that using C4 can help in defusing other unexploded ordinance. We would survey the flight line after an "alarm red" (Attack Imminent or In-Progress) for any ordinance to be disarmed and removed. We rode around in an Armored Personnel Carrier or Peacekeeper, which was pretty cool.

After Italy, I moved to the other side of the world. I was on my way to the Pacific Air Force (PACAF) Osan AFB, South Korea, which was designated a short-tour/1 year. Located less than 50 miles from the North Korean border, also known as the demilitarized zone, it really opened my eyes to the seriousness of our



Skiing Kaprun Austria

mission. For one week out of every month we had combat operation exercises, to maintain readiness for any threat. We wore full chemical gear, Kevlar flak vests, gas masks and helmets. We worked hard during exercise mode, but had fun on the weekends, in the many nightclubs just outside the gate. I also spent a great deal of time volunteering at local orphanages and personally sponsored 3 children. We assisted with self-help projects, such as installing floors and light fixtures. It was al-

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ways such a treat spending time with the children.

Once a year on base, we had Chin-Muk, which was a Korean/American Friendship Festival. Along with the local surrounding communities, we engaged in a cultural event, which celebrated the partnership between the U.S. and the ROK. This provided a great opportunity for both cultures to learn about each other. The children from the orphanage were also able to join in the games, food and festivities.

While stationed at Osan, I was able to connect with my cousin, who was in China at the time, teaching English as part of his studies with Columbia University. He visited for the Christmas/New-Year's break. We took a tour of the DMZ at the border. At the end of the tour, there was a brief moment when we were able to walk onto the communist North Korean side. We were sternly instructed not to make eye contact or any hand gestures toward the heavily armed North Korean guards that could be misconstrued as aggressive. They were stationed at every window of the building observing our every move.



Top: Orphanage in Korea
Bottom: Robin in Air Force BDU's

One exciting highlight: I was awarded an incentive flight on a KC-135 mid-air refueler by the Chief of Base Supply. We refueled 3 A-10's and 2 F-16s, which was surreal! I was able to get down with the boom operator, as he connected to the aircraft. Such a neat experience.



Incentive flight on KC135 in Korea 1991

I very much enjoyed my time in Korea. The different culture, people, food and shopping always kept things interesting. I have since learned to make my own favorite Korean



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dishes, such as Bulgogi, Jab Chae and many types of Kimchi. Although it was a tough year, it was an experience that I will always treasure.

In 1992, I was on my way to Edwards Air Force Base, located in the Mojave Desert in Southern California. I supported the F-15, F-16 and C-18 aircraft, while working in MICAP (Mission Impaired Capability Awaiting Parts). Shortly after arriving I met my soon to be husband.

One of the most memorable events was when the Space Shuttle landed at Edwards. If there was inclement weather at Kennedy Space Center, we were the back-up landing site. During my time, 4 different Space Shuttles landed: Endeavour, Columbia, Discovery and Atlantis. Prior to the landing, there would always be a base wide alert to prepare everyone, mainly because when the Space Shuttle enters the Earth's atmosphere at supersonic speeds, it creates sonic booms. In fact, you'll hear not one, but two sonic booms! Working in MICAP, I was able to obtain needed parts for the Space Shuttle.

In 1995, my husband and I decided to take the early out incentive program. We drove our Toyota Camry, U-Haul trailer in tow, from California to the Grand Canyon, Zion, over the Colorado Rockies and through the mid-west states all the way to Boston. We made the most of our trip by including different National Parks to make it memorable. It was a challenge transitioning, but we adapted and made it work.

In 1999, my husband and I separated mutually and amicably. I purchased my townhouse, utilizing the VA loan. I was an office manager at 2 different embroidering companies for approximately 6 years. They embroidered resort wear, such as sweatshirts, hats, t-shirts, etc. Unfortunately, the second company I worked for went out of business. Being in a solo situation and unemployed I worked as a waitress to help supplement my income. The job market was scarce at the time. Finding something that would be comparable financially, I would have to venture into the Boston area. This was not something I was interested in doing.

After much thought and contemplation, I realized I did not want to go back to a 9-to-5 job, helping someone else realize their dream as a business owner. I remember an Aflac Agent coming in to show how they could help, by offering bene-

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fits to employees at no cost to the employer. If the employees want it, they can pay. It just made sense to me.

In 2003, I saw an ad on Monster.com for an Aflac Insurance Agent. I really had no experience in sales, but had always been told I could do well at it. I went to the interview, which went very well. Bob LaRoche (RIP) who recruited me said, "The ball is in your court. Get licensed and come back and see me." I was onboard. This sounded like a great opportunity. Being a self-employed, business owner who helps people and their families, was right up my alley. I decided to take the plunge. It was the perfect time to "cross-train" into something new. I studied very hard and obtained my Accident, Health and Life Insurance licenses.

It was certainly a challenge going from a structured environment to making up my own schedule. Lacking even the slightest bit of discipline can certainly be problematic. Not having a large network in place, it was a challenge during the first 2 years cold calling and prospecting for business. Being self-employed meant commission only. If I didn't work, I didn't get paid. Having a lot of responsibilities financially, I maintained my waitressing job to have some steady income. Eighteen years later, I'm happy to say I have established and maintained my business for nearly 2 decades. I am enjoying the rewards from working hard. The second best decision of my life.



Robin with her toy poodle, Mason James

In 2012, I was able to reunite with one of my best friends I was stationed with in Italy, 22 years prior. She told me she and her husband were just assigned to Aviano and to come over for a visit. I was lucky enough to be able to go over for 3 glorious weeks. Having her house, car and access to the base for necessities made this trip extraordinary. Seeing my friend, was like no time had passed, even though it had been over 2 decades. Trekking around our old stomping ground and reminiscing was amazing. However, being able to experience Aviano over two decades later alongside my best friend was the experience of a lifetime. Being older and having a much greater appreciation for the area and now seeing it through more mature eyes was unbelievable. WE knew not to waste a single minute. I left when I was 22 years old and came back when I was 44. September was the perfect time of

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year for this trip. The first night we went to a pizzeria that we used to go to when we were "kids." We traveled all over Italy, Lake Como, Cinque Terre, Tarviso, which is on the border of Austria and Slovenia, Venice, Florence, Pisa and Luca, which happens to be my new favorite town in Italy.

I am completely grateful for the time I spent serving our country. If hind sight were 20-20, the only change I would make, would be to finish my 20 years, and retire from the Air Force at age 38 before starting my career with Aflac. However, I have no regrets. Everything in our life time happens for a reason. I am a true believer of that.



65th Annual Air Force Ball, 2012. Aviano Air Force Base, Italy

Today, I spend my time growing my business, cooking, entertaining, and spending time with my best friend, Mason James. He is my 6 year old Toy Poodle, who I love to pieces. I also love playing poker, cribbage, and backgammon. Over a decade ago, I started playing and dealing charity poker events with the Eastern Poker Tour. The most memorable tournament would be the Marco Sturm (from the Boston Bruins) Tournament at the Liberty Hotel in Boston. Many star players from the team played. I spent more of the time getting pictures and autographs, than dealing.

I'm so very grateful for social media and technology which has enabled me to connect with over 60 Air Force friends. Being in the military, your friends become your family. They will always have your "six" (back). The best decision for me, was joining the Air Force.

I am a believer that if able, one should serve at least one year in any branch of the military for your country, like so many other countries do. By doing so, people would gain structure, guidance and discipline, which I believe can only contribute to a more respectful and productive society; people would be better equipped to face the world.



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By serving, people would better understand, appreciate and take less for granted our good fortune of living in the United States. The United States is the greatest country in the world-by far. There is unlimited potential and possibilities for anyone willing to put in the work, time and effort.

I will be forever grateful for having served in the United States Air Force-I know I'm a better person because of it. Incredible memories that will last a life time. I will never tire saying, "I'm an Air Force Veteran, who proudly served her country."

Aim High - USAF



Robin at dinner with Dan Amos, the president and CEO of AFLAC and other Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire AFLAC representatives.